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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 004887

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DEPT FOR IO, NEA AND PRM FRONT OFFICES

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TAGS: [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [JO](#) [UNRWA](#)

SUBJECT: UNRWA COMGEN HANSEN TESTS WATERS FOR POSSIBLE
FOURTH TERM

REF: A. GENEVA 1643

[B](#). 03 AMMAN 7412

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires David Hale per 1.5 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary and Comment: In a June 14 phone call to refcoord, UNRWA chef de cabinet Aquarone indicated that ComGen Peter Hansen may not intend to step down after his current term expires in February 2005. We believe that a fourth term for Hansen serves neither U.S. nor UNRWA interests and recommend that the Department identify a short list of acceptable candidates and develop a strategy to achieve selection of a reform-minded successor to Hansen. The September 2004 major donors meeting will be a key time to consolidate support for alternatives. Absent a clear consensus candidate, UNSYG Annan could very well approve a new term for Hansen. End summary and comment.

[1](#)2. (C) UNRWA Chef de Cabinet Rene Aquarone phoned refcoord June 14 to sound out U.S. views on UNRWA succession. Noting that Commissioner General Peter Hansen's third three-year term will expire in February 2005, Aquarone said Hansen "has not indicated whether he intends to continue." Quickly backpedaling, Aquarone added that of course it was up to UN Secretary General Annan to decide whether Hansen should

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continue. While he claimed not to have discussed the issue with Hansen, Aquarone said Hansen was tired, ready to move on and had arranged a few post-UNRWA options. Nevertheless, Aquarone continued, current events in the region seemed to argue against switching leadership at this particular moment. Commenting that no one has identified any strong candidates yet, Aquarone asked refcoord to clarify the U.S. position on UNRWA succession.

[1](#)3. (C) Refcoord responded that the U.S. shared the feeling of many other donors that it was time for a change of leadership at UNRWA. Hansen has been with the agency for nearly nine years and, although we are grateful for his service to UNRWA, the U.S. believes the time is right for a new Commissioner General. While the U.S. has not yet identified any particular candidates, we have begun informal discussions with other key stakeholders. (Comment: During bilateral meetings on the margins of UNRWA's June 7-8 Geneva conference, PRM A/S Dewey stressed to other donors that it was important to begin seeking candidates with the right qualifications to take over leadership of the agency in February 2005. See ref a.)

[1](#)4. (C) Aquarone then said that Deputy Commissioner General Karen AbuZayd enjoys the support of many UNRWA staff and, in his opinion, would make a superb Commissioner General. Although the U.S. in recent years has preferred to have a U.S. citizen in the deputy slot, would we support a U.S. citizen for the top job? Noting that AbuZayd has been a contender for U/SYG jobs elsewhere in the UN system, Aquarone suggested it would be better to keep AbuZayd in UNRWA.

[1](#)5. (C) Comment: Aquarone's phone call contradicts previous statements by senior UNRWA officials that Hansen will step down at the end of his current term (ref b) and confirms rumors that Hansen may seek a fourth term. Without a clear strategy and consensus candidate among major donors and host governments to replace Hansen, UNSYG Annan could very well approve a new term for Hansen. We believe a fourth mandate for Hansen would not best serve UNRWA and U.S. interests, and hope the Department can identify a short list of candidates and develop a strategy to win support for a reform-minded successor. The September 2004 UNRWA major donors meeting could be a decisive moment for gaining consensus support; we need to start laying the groundwork now. If we do not have a consensus candidate by then, Hansen's fourth term will quickly move from possibility to fait accompli.

HALE